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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Department of Energy Reaches Agreements with 11 States to Assist Workers Applying for Compensation**

### ***Independent Physicians Panels Begin Review of Cases***

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – The Department of Energy (DOE) has reached agreements with eleven states on how to help contractor employees obtain assistance in applying for state workers' compensation benefits under the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act (EEOICPA). Specifically, the agreements outline information sharing between the states and the DOE's Office of Worker Advocacy and how that information will be used to facilitate the claims process.

The agreements that have been reached are with the states representing more than 99 percent of claims -- Alaska, California, Colorado, Iowa, Kentucky, New Mexico, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Washington. Additional agreements are pending.

Under the program, workers or their survivors may apply to DOE for a determination of whether the worker's illness or death arose from exposure to toxic substances at an Energy Department facility. Claims will be reviewed by an independent physicians' panel. If the physicians' panel finds that a worker's illness resulted from exposure while at work, the department will assist the worker in filing a claim with their state and direct the worker's contractor employer not to contest the claim. The goal is to remove bureaucratic barriers that can confront deserving workers with occupational illness when they seek to obtain state workers' compensation benefits.

With the rule now effective, all steps are in place to fully implement Subtitle D of the Act. Nothing in the agreements alters or affects individual state statutes or the way in which they are administered. Current federal law requires state workers compensation processes be followed in processing a claim.

To date, the department has received more than 19,000 cases. Processing of cases has begun and will proceed in the order in which the cases were received. Each case will be assigned to a Office of Worker Advocacy Nurse Caseworker who will be the main point of contact with the applicant.

DOE workers or their survivors who are interested in applying to the DOE for assistance should contact its Toll Free Hotline at 1-877-447-9756. Additional information is available through the Internet at <http://www.eh.doe.gov/advocacy>.

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